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Refugee education and justice issues of representation, redistribution and recognition

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This paper examines justice issues of representation, redistribution and recognition within a specialised secondary school for immigrant and refugee students in Queensland, Australia. Fraser's three-dimensional model of justice – towards the ideal of 'participatory parity' – is drawn on to analyse interview data gathered from a study that sought to identify productive approaches to addressing cultural diversity. Through these lenses, injustices created by mainstream/dominant discourses within and beyond the school are highlighted. The paper details the school's efforts to support greater equity for these students through educator advocacy, critically reflective practice and a centring of students' perspectives. The significance of educators identifying and challenging the limits and exclusions of these discourses to support these efforts is highlighted. Fraser's theorising is presented as useful in capturing, understanding and addressing justice and marginality in schools amid the broader social context where matters of justice are characterised by uncertainty, complexity and contention.

Keywords: politics of education; racial discrimination; refugees

Introduction

This paper draws on Nancy Fraser's work (1997, 2007a, 2007b) to explore justice issues of representation, redistribution and recognition within a specialised secondary school for immigrant and refugee students in Queensland, Australia. The school was one of three participant schools in a study that sought to identify productive approaches to addressing student difference and diversity. The school's culturally diverse student population and its strong reputation for supporting equity for marginalised students offer important insight into how these different dimensions of justice play out in relation to refugee education. Fraser's model of justice foregrounds key tensions associated with the school's endeavors to support refugee students. The paper draws attention to the exclusions created by dominant/mainstream discourses for understanding justice. These discourses produce exclusions beyond the school – for example, the school's governing body silences the equity priorities of refugee students. They also produce exclusions within the school – for instance, in educators' tendencies to homogenise the cultural diversity of refugee students (Fraser, 2007a). Through detailing the school's efforts to support greater equity for these students, the paper illustrates the significance of educators identifying and

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challenging the limits of dominant/mainstream discourses for conceptualising issues of justice for marginalised groups. Key to such efforts is educator advocacy, critically reflective practice and a centring of students' perspectives.

Fraser's theorising (2007a, 2007b) is presented as useful in capturing, understanding and addressing issues of justice and marginality in schools amid the broader social context where such issues are uncertain, complex and highly contentious. Fraser theorises injustice as arising from three analytically distinct dimensions: economic, cultural and political. Economic injustices occur when the structures of society generate maldistribution or class inequality for particular categories of social actors. Cultural injustices occur when institutionalised or hierarchical patterns of cultural value generate misrecognition or status inequality for particular social groups and political injustices arise when the constitution of political space misrepresents or renders voiceless particular groups (Fraser, 2007b).

As a model that distinguishes between redistributive, recognitive and representative issues of injustice, Fraser's model is useful in capturing and addressing the broad scope and multidimensionality of justice claims. Central here, as Fraser notes, is seeking 'parity of participation' on all three dimensions, as she explains:

> justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life. On the view of justice as participatory parity, overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction. (2007b, p. 17)

Drawing on this notion of participatory parity, justice for all is possible when the structures of the political economy reflect an equitable distribution of material resources; when equity is reflected in patterns of cultural recognition and valuing; and when the constitution of political space ensures equitable representation (Fraser, 2007a). Through these theoretical lenses, the paper offers insight into how schools might more productively understand and approach issues of equity and schooling for marginalised students in a broader context where there is a lack of shared understanding about these issues (Fraser, 2007a).

The unprecedented diversity, complexity and uncertainty of the present era demand a multidimensional approach to understanding and remedying injustice. Global developments, including the rise of neoliberalism and globalised finance, transnational migration and global media flows, global governance and transnational politics (Fraser, 2007b), have unsettled established or taken-for-granted paradigms of justice. In particular, such conditions represent a contestation of Westphalian (or nation-state centred) frames of political space and a problematising of state-centred understandings about the what and who of justice, as Fraser explains:

> Previously, the Westphalian framing of political space tended to go without saying, as arguments about justice were assumed to concern relations among fellow citizens, to be subject to debate within national publics, and to contemplate redress by territorial states. Focused largely on the 'what' of justice (redistribution or recognition), they took for granted that the 'who' was the national citizenry. Today, however, the Westphalian frame is intensely contested … Problematising the Westphalian constitution of political space, such disputes raise the suggestion that justice may require decision-making in a different frame. (2007a, p. 313)

Against this backdrop, Fraser (2007b) describes the present context as one of 'abnormal justice' where there is a lack of shared understanding about, for example,

who is entitled to consideration in matters of justice and how injustices should be remedied (2007a). For Fraser, the uncertainties of the current era bring into sharp relief the imperative of questioning the normalising assumptions within current frames for understanding and addressing injustice. Central here, as Fraser argues (2007c, p. 82), is making these frames 'objects of critique and political action' in terms of exposing and contesting the ways in which they exclude or obscure particular questions of (economic, cultural and political) justice.

Exposing and contesting the exclusions of mainstream frames for thinking about justice is, of course, the cornerstone of much post-colonial work (see, for example, Benhabib, 2002; Benhabib, Shapiro, & Petranovic, 2007; hooks, 1994; Mohanty, 2003). Consistent with this work, research specifically addressing issues of justice and refugee education in Australia argues the imperative of educators taking 'ethical action'. Christie and Sidhu (2006, drawing on Foucault) define this action as 'maintaining a stance of calling the familiar into question through vigorous analysis which interrogates silences, scrutinizes invisibilities, and disturbs familiarities' (p. 462, see also Matthews, 2008; Sidhu & Taylor, 2006). Such a stance brings to light some of the tensions and discrepancies associated with the 'who' and 'how' of justice that have arisen within broader post-Westphalian conditions where the dynamics and complexities of transnational migration have collided with and challenged the stability of mainstream paradigms for conceptualising justice (Fraser, 2007a).

The adoption of this stance in Sidhu and Taylor's examination of education policy (2007), for example, reveals tensions and discrepancies associated with the who of justice. According to these authors education policy in Australia has reflected an 'undifferentiated ethnoscape' in its subsuming of refugee education under broader categories concerning social justice, multiculturalism and English-language provision (see also Taylor, 2008). Within such categories, refugee students' learning and social needs have tended to be invisible – invariably conflated with the needs of migrants, 'new arrivals' or 'ESL [English as a Second Language] learners' (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2008). Education policy can thus be seen as creating boundaries around who counts in relation to justice considerations – for refugee students, it has clearly been a vehicle of exclusion (Fraser, 2007a) that has compounded their disadvantage (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). While enabling some recognition of the language needs of refugees, these boundaries have sidelined more complex educational issues associated, for example, with other learning needs including social and emotional needs (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2008). These mainstream boundaries or discourses are theorised in this paper as generating political injustice through misrepresenting and/or rendering voiceless this group of students thus compromising parity of participation on this dimension of justice.

Inadequate material and human resources for refugee students is another concern that can be attributed to similar tensions associated with the who of justice. Certainly, neoliberal discourses have constituted a shift away from equity and social justice priorities and this (combined with limited representation of refugee issues in education policy) has done little to militate against this lack of resourcing (Christie & Sidhu, 2006; Taylor, 2008). This has meant that teachers and schools are not well-resourced to support their refugee students. Sidhu and Taylor (2009, see also Cassity & Gow, 2005) argue that current resources in relation to teachers, support staff and professional development are inadequate in providing the holistic support necessary for addressing the complex needs of the growing numbers of refugee students in schools. Following this, it is commonplace for schools to seek supple-

mentary funding/resources for their refugee students from community and private organisations. In this paper, matters of economic injustice are understood within the context of these exclusionary discourses and their capacity to undermine parity of participation for refugee students through producing maldistribution or class inequality.

Similar tensions are evident in relation to the how of justice for refugee students – i.e. discrepancies associated with how best to support refugee students. Consistent with the representation of refugee students within education policy, concerns here are associated with the tendency for schooling and teacher practice to homogenise these students' identities (Ferfolja, 2009; Matthews, 2008; Rose, 2000; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). This homogenising has often constructed refugee students along deficit lines with a predominant focus on their disadvantages, in relation to, for example, the trauma of their pre-migration experiences, their language and cultural barriers, and their lack of social capital. Sidhu and Taylor (2007) note here that such a focus has created discursive links between transition and risk factors and ignored the potential of these students to positively contribute to society. These authors (see also, Rose, 1996, 2000) highlight the negative implications of these links, for example, as reframing the responsibility and success of settlement to refugee communities (and thus rendering less important other significant issues that impact on settlement such as poverty, unemployment and racism, and the responsibilities of governments to provide well-resourced services). They argue that these links are likely to perpetuate an 'at-risk subjectivity while rendering peripheral the resilient subject-position, an equally vital narrative in understanding and building upon the extraordinary childhoods of refugee children and youth' (Sidhu and Taylor, 2007, p. 290). Similarly, Ferfolja (2009) notes how a focus on issues of disadvantage within refugee education tends to construct refugee students as victims. She argues that this construction disregards the complex realities of these students' lives and, in particular, refugee students' high levels of determination, courage and strength. These mainstream or dominant ways of approaching the education of refugee students are theorised here as matters of cultural injustice – hindering parity of participation through generating misrecognition or status inequality for these students.

Recognising the political, economic and cultural injustices arising from current tensions around the who and how of justice for refugee students is important. Such recognition brings to light the imperative of critically interrogating the mainstream discourses that compromise equity for these students (Fraser, 2007c; Matthews, 2008).

Equity and justice for marginalised groups are key goals of schooling (MCEETYA, 2008; UNESCO, 2003). It is thus incumbent on teachers and schools to provide conditions that work towards actively challenging the significant levels of disadvantage and discrimination that characterise the life and school experiences of refugee students. However, as much research points out, teachers lack familiarity with the complexity and diversity of refugee students' backgrounds and remain ill-prepared for the demands of supporting the educational and social needs of these students (Ferfolja, 2009; Matthews, 2008; Miller, Mitchell, & Brown, 2005; Naidoo, 2010). This is perhaps unsurprising given the complexity of patterns of transnational migration to Australia over the last few decades and the new equity challenges this complexity has generated for schools. Since the 1990s, for example, Australia has resettled refugees from a diverse range of countries including Bosnia

and Croatia, the Middle East and, more recently, countries of conflict in Africa (Refugee Council of Australia, 2008).

Against this backdrop, it is imperative that current understandings and approaches for supporting these students are critically examined. In this paper the focus is on the propensity of mainstream discourses to generate injustices of representation, redistribution and recognition for refugee students (Fraser, 2007b). The paper examines the efforts of educators to question and remedy these injustices within and beyond their school arising from a lack of agreement in relation to the who of justice claims (beyond the school) and the how of justice remedies (within the school) (Fraser, 2007a). For the educators featured in this paper, this process importantly led to making transparent and disrupting mainstream discourses that silence, essentialise and inferiorise refugee students and to recognising the diverse, complex and multi-faceted factors within these students' identities and experiences that impact on their educational engagement and achievement (see Christie & Sidhu, 2006; Naidoo, 2010; Oliver, Haig, & Grote 2009). This process opened spaces for the school to support greater parity of participation for these students in relation to destabilising the political, economic and cultural barriers impeding their schooling success. Such destabilising was supported through educator advocacy, critically reflective practice and a centring of students' perspectives.

Research context and methods

The paper draws on data from a study that sought to identify productive approaches to addressing issues of cultural diversity in three schools situated in Queensland, Australia. Broadly, the study's focus was on (1) how issues of cultural diversity and justice are understood and practised in schools and (2) the conditions necessary to support schools to more equitably address issues of cultural diversity. The three schools were selected because of their outstanding reputations as schools that catered well to the equity and social justice concerns of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially those of Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds. The focus in this paper is on one of these schools, 'Peppermint' Grove State High School, as this school offers insight into how the three dimensions of justice articulated by Fraser (2007a, 2007b) play out in relation to refugee education. The school provides intensive ESL education and settlement services to newly arrived immigrant and refugee students to Australia. The school prepares students (aged between 12 and 17 years) for their participation in mainstream public secondary schooling where they will continue with ESL support. Peppermint Grove is specialised within the Australian education context in offering refugee and immigrant students this support. The duration of time students spend at the school depends on their academic/social confidence to participate in mainstream school. Students stay at Peppermint Grove anywhere between six months and two years. In its 25-year history, the cultural makeup of the student population has always been very diverse and changeable in reflecting broader patterns of transnational migration to Australia. In 2009 the school's 200 students were approximately half refugees and half immigrants representing over 30 different ethnic groups from, for example, various parts of Africa, the Middle East, China and South East Asia. The refugee students are from countries of war or political unrest with many having experienced high levels of persecution (on the basis, for example, of their race, ethnicity and religion). These students have been granted refugee status by the Australian government and are holders of humanitarian visas.

Peppermint Grove, consistent with the good practice of many alternative schooling models, takes a holistic and inclusive approach to supporting disadvantaged students (see, for example, Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Taylor, 2008). Recognising the complexity of students' learning, social and emotional needs, the school adopted a range of programs that acknowledged the inter-relationships between education, health, social and economic well-being. For example, the school linked students with particular settlement services and agencies and specialised support groups for refugees and immigrants and it supported access to interpreters, extra language and mathematics support, music and art therapy, family services, and initiatives such as International Women's Day and Harmony Day.

The school also supported its disadvantaged students through culturally inclusive staff recruitment. For example, while many of the teachers and support staff were white with European/Anglo heritage, Anna (school principal) heavily stressed the significance of particular cultural groups being represented:

> So the evidence [of equity] is in who we employ. For example, I've just recently put on a Somali girl because you look at [this group] – they're very unsuccessful students on the whole and [there are] big issues there … [so] we employed this incredibly sensible young Somali woman … and most recently we've employed a Rohingyan who is not teacher aide material [but] … he's here to make those students feel safe … to be useful to the kids.

The school's equity focus on refugee students and the study's concerns with exploring this focus prompted heightened consideration for the ethical issues that might arise in researching this vulnerable group. Standard university protocols relating to matters of confidentiality/anonymity and informed consent and withdrawal were adhered to in ensuring the ethical integrity of the study. Ethical integrity was further assured through the study's explicit and critical focus on school approaches to justice, especially approaches to respecting marginalised cultures and providing contexts where marginalised voices are heard.

The methods of data collection involved interviews with staff and students, observations of classroom practice and a cultural audit of the school's resources. In describing Peppermint Grove, this paper draws on some of the cultural audit which involved consulting demographic information about the school including information to do with the school's philosophies and policies in the area of equity and diversity. Predominantly, however, the paper focuses on key interview data gathered from teachers as these data are relevant to the refugee education issues outlined earlier in relation to Fraser's three-dimensional model of justice. The study's equity focus guided a purposive sampling method for the selection of participants on the basis that they were responsible for, or played a key part in, addressing equity at the school. Individual interviews were thus conducted with the principal ('Anna'); senior school head of curriculum ('Samantha'); home liaison officer ('Jenny'); head of the therapies program ('Natalie'); and creative arts therapies teachers ('Lisa' and 'Maria'). Interviews with staff members (all of whom were of Anglo/European heritage) on two occasions were conducted at the school and lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. The first interview sought to gather information about, and explore: the respondent's specific role at the school; descriptions of the school (its purpose, philosophy, climate, etc.) and its students; key cultural concerns within and beyond the school; how such concerns were addressed; structures and strategies of support for students and staff; and personal philosophies about difference, equity and justice.

The second interview explored further the issues of equity that arose in the first interview in relation to, for example, specific programs or endeavours that each participant was involved in such as the arts therapies program or home liaison issues.

The data were analysed drawing on Fraser's three-dimensional theorising of justice within her principle of parity of participation (1997, 2007a) as outlined earlier. Through these lenses the school was interpreted as addressing the dimensions of cultural and economic justice – i.e. its range of specialised programs and links with settlement services and agencies could be seen as supporting greater parity of participation for refugee students through explicitly recognising and valuing the culture of these students and through distributing material resources to these students. Through Fraser's lenses, the school was also interpreted as addressing the dimension of political justice with its emphasis on representing students' different cultural backgrounds within the staff (Fraser, 2007b). While Anna's earlier remarks in relation to such representation might be read as drawing on cultural essentialism (in terms of prescribing and delimiting who can speak or act on behalf of marginalised groups), greater parity of participation for refugee students is supported in her attempts to create a more equitable and inclusive space for her Somali and Rohingyan students. Such programs, endeavors and efforts acknowledge and attempt to transform the social patterns within mainstream or dominant education contexts that contribute to cultural, economic and political injustice for refugee students (Fraser, 2007a).

Further analysis of the interview data with reference to Fraser's parity of participation principle was conducted in relation to the respondents' philosophies about equity and justice. This analysis revealed common understandings – supporting equity and justice for marginalised students at Peppermint Grove were similarly defined as, and focused on, ensuring that social arrangements within the school did not prevent students from participating on par with others (Fraser, 1997). For example, Jenny, spoke of 'trying to take some of the pressures in students' lives away', 'minim[ising] factors of disadvantage' and 'enabling opportunities'. For Lisa, pursuing equity and justice meant creating conditions where all students could 'access what everyone else can'. For Anna, equity and justice were about 'removing barriers preventing students from being all they can be' and 'ensuring that students' backgrounds and everything about their past lives' did not 'equal being a barrier'. There was consensus amongst the educators that refugee students were most educationally disadvantaged. In pursuing equitable outcomes, these students were thus seen as entitled to extra support, as Anna noted:

> We give refugee kids more time if they need it and more services and so on. And some services when they get in short supply … we have only this much of the cake and we have to give it to refugees … My biggest concern is with the ones who've been born and bred now in refugee camps [who] just don't have comparable or adequate schooling … it's the ones who are so traumatised or have failure to thrive … where you pull out all the stops…

Deeper interrogation of the interview data with reference to Fraser's parity of participation principle, however, revealed the difficulties and tensions involved in pursuing this view of justice for refugee students. This interrogation highlighted the respondents' understandings of the mainstream discourses within and beyond the school that served to exclude and/or obscure particular justice concerns for refugee students. Specifically, the analysis drew attention to the limits of mainstream

discourses, firstly, beyond the school, in relation to competing views associated with the who of justice (that is, who is entitled to consideration in matters of justice), and secondly, within the school in relation to discrepancies associated with the how of justice (that is, how justice matters might best be addressed). Beyond the school, this analysis highlighted how the school's equity priorities were silenced within mainstream schooling discourses with particular implications in relation to matters of political and economic justice for the school's refugee students. Within the school, such analysis highlighted an obscuring of these priorities with particular implications in relation to matters of cultural justice. Fraser's (2007a) understanding – that justice for all is possible when there is an equitable distribution of material resources; when there are equitable patterns of cultural recognition; and when the constitution of political space ensures equitable representation – informed the analysis of the school's efforts to resolve these issues of exclusion to better represent refugee students. These efforts in the form of educator advocacy, critically reflective practice and a centring of students' perspectives were interpreted as reflecting 'ethical action' in calling the familiar into question (Christie & Sidhu, 2006).

The limitations of mainstream discourses beyond the school

The respondents highlighted the limitations of mainstream discourses for addressing the needs of refugee students in relation to their concerns about the school being marginalised by its governing state education body (Education Queensland, EQ[1]). Anna explained in this respect that she had to be constantly 'vigilant' in pointing out to this body how particular systemic mandates, such as mainstream/standardised testing, were not appropriate for students at Peppermint Grove in terms of their limited English-language proficiency and schooling experience. Along similar lines, in relation to issues of marginalisation, Samantha noted that the specialised knowledge associated with the education and settlement of students within the school was neither well recognised nor positioned as legitimate by EQ.

> I think we have a specialised knowledge in the school in terms of what it is we're trying to do here [but] … I think in the bigger context of Education Queensland, I'm nervous that that's something we have to keep fighting to hang on to, there's not a lot of recognition of that … when I was in Central Office and representing our voice I felt that I was damned because I'd come from Peppermint Grove … there's a real perception that we wouldn't know really what the problems are out there because it's not like in other schools … and it was like, 'oh okay well that's silencing me by saying, basically it means I can't contribute here'. (Samantha)

In her association with principals/administrators from other schools, Anna similarly noted the exclusions created by mainstream frames and her sense of being silenced as an advocate for her school within these frames:

> When I go to in-service in the mainstream, I'm usually really annoyed when I get there and think, 'you should be more inclusive, you should be saying this, you should be saying that' … these sorts of views [about inclusivity and marginalised groups] aren't shared at all by fellow principals as a general rule and sometimes if you do say something at a bigger group you hear 'oh there she goes again' you know … if you put your hand up too much they roll their eyes and groan every time you say anything and you think, 'look, maybe it's best just to be quiet'.

In these examples, mainstream discourses beyond the school can be seen as creating political injustices (Fraser, 2007b). The discourses that Anna and Samantha refer to

are seen as inappropriate and delegitimising of the school's specialised knowledge, expertise and focus on student inclusivity and marginality. They are interpreted as perpetuating injustices of political misrepresentation or voicelessness for the staff and students at Peppermint Grove – these injustices for Samantha are manifest in feeling 'damned', silenced and unable to contribute as a representative of the school within the space of 'Central Office' (i.e. EQ) and for Anna they are manifest in the maligning of her advocacy voice and in her resolve that 'maybe it's best just to be quiet' within the space of mainstream in-service. For Anna and Samantha, dissonance around the who of justice compromises participatory parity for the school and its students (Fraser, 2007a). Consistent with Sidhu and Taylor's work (2007), these spaces can be interpreted as subsuming refugee students under a mainstream umbrella which ignores the complex educational and social needs of this group. In this regard, they can also be interpreted as racialised in perpetuating the view that the (English-speaking Anglo-Australian) mainstream is the unquestioned 'norm' (Young, 1990).

Further political injustices associated with dissonance around the who of justice, especially for refugee students, were noted by Anna in her mention of the lack of ESL and refugee education policy within EQ as compared with other state education bodies in Australia:

> There's just no comparison whatsoever with the pre-migration experience of a non-refugee to a refugee and it's not protected or enshrined in policy in the education system in Queensland. In Victoria it is – so they have an ESL policy which we're only just drafting here and they also have a refugee education policy.

These comments are consistent with Sidhu and Taylor's (2007) concerns about education policy discourses in Australia obscuring issues of equity for refugee students. Anna notes that such obscuring is particularly salient in Queensland where there is no educational policy to ensure equity for refugee students. Like the previous comments, these mainstream discourses create injustices of misrepresentation and compromise parity of participation for refugee students – such discourses ignore the educational and social needs of refugee students and are racialised in their privileging of dominant cultural norms (Young, 1990). Resonating with key refugee education literature, Anna problematises this misrepresentation or, more accurately, lack of representation in policy discourse as an issue of justice in terms of the high levels of pre-migration disadvantage refugee students have suffered and the responsibility incumbent on education systems to remedy this disadvantage (see Christie & Sidhu, 2006; Ferfolja, 2009; Matthews, 2008; Taylor, 2008). She thus highlights, as these authors do, conflicting understandings about the who of justice (Fraser, 2009). Also like these authors, Anna's comments reflect the view that justice for refugee students requires decision-making within a different paradigm (Fraser, 2007b).

For the staff at Peppermint Grove, constructing a different and more equitable paradigm involved reaching out to external agencies and organisations for funding support – particularly in relation to pursuing greater distributive (economic) justice for refugee students (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007, 2009; Taylor, 2008). Like many other such schools (see Cassity & Gow, 2005), the respondents felt constrained by the inadequacies of their resources for providing the holistic support necessary to address the specific and changing educational and social needs of refugee students. As Anna noted, there was a lack of infrastructure to support the complexity of

student needs at the school and there were a large number of programs and resources at the school that were not funded by the Education Department (EQ). She noted here the importance of the school's advocacy on behalf of students, as she commented: 'I do see my role as principal slash advocate for [the students] … there will always be a need for advocacy'.

For example, the onsite therapies centre at the school to support refugee students was not funded by the Education Department and thus, as the coordinator of the centre, Natalie, pointed out, 'we are constantly looking for funding … benefactors and grants and things like that to keep things ticking over'. At the time of data collection, the centre (including its four staff members) was being funded by a number of different private companies. There were many other instances where external funding was sought for specialised refugee programs or resources. Jenny, the home liaison officer, told of another example in relation to support from community organisations to ensure that the Muslim female students could participate in the school's swimming program:

> swimming for the Muslim girls; you know that's not included in Education Department curriculum or funding. So we have to advocate … at the moment we've just received some money from [two community groups] after advocating and going and giving speeches so that we can buy some specially designed Muslim women's swimsuits. So, next term we'll be able to offer special swimming in a special swimming pool with only women around for our Muslim girls to get them water safe.

The school's representation of, and advocacy for, refugee students challenges dominant understandings and approaches to addressing questions of equity and justice for these students. The school exposes the discourses within the Education Department, as generating mispresentation and maldistribution – in subsuming/silencing refugee students' educational needs under a mainstream and racialised umbrella. The school positions these discourses as impeding these students' parity of participation. Towards creating social arrangements that permit greater participation for these students in relation to these two dimensions the school foregrounds refugee student voices, is inclusive of their justice claims (political justice) and distributes material resources to support these claims (Fraser, 2007a).

The limitations of mainstream discourses within the school

For educators at Peppermint Grove, there was a lack of shared understanding about how injustices might be best remedied. This lack of agreement seemed to stem from the ways in which educators constructed student difference in their attempts to recognise and value such difference. Consistent with the concerns about refugee students expressed in the research literature (Ferfolja, 2009; Matthews, 2008; Rose, 2000), there was a tendency in these attempts for a homogenising of cultural diversity. In similar ways to the mainstream discourses detailed in the previous section, this homogenising could be seen as subsuming refugee student difference under a racialised (Anglo-Australian-centred) umbrella. The implications of this homogenising related to how such cultural (mis)recognition might impede these students' participatory parity in terms of potentially reinscribing deficit understandings of cultural difference (Ferfolja, 2009; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

The explicit recognition and valuing of cultural difference was an important strategy at the school towards promoting equity and inclusion, however, such

recognition and valuing were far from unproblematic. The following remarks from Anna bring to light particular discrepancies associated with how best to approach justice in relation to the school's Rohingyan students:

> I'm wanting us to be very careful … at the moment whenever anyone uses the word Rohingya it's, 'aren't they cute', 'aren't they gorgeous', 'aren't they lovely' and you know they're physically quite small so we're going to have to be very careful that we don't fall into another kind of racism … you know like, they are quite beautiful and the little girls are dressed in saris with jewels and they look like eight year olds but they're 12 or 13 year olds. There was an incident with one of the visiting schools where somebody picked one of these students up … you see it's that cuteness, it's like the exoticisation of women … [and the danger is] belittling them and just not having the same expectations of them as human beings.

Anna draws attention here to how the racialised discourses educators take up generate assumptions of misrecognition that reduce Rohingyan culture to an exotic other. She highlights the potentially disempowering effects of essentialising and infantilising this group of students. While educators' constructions of Rohingyan students as 'cute' and 'gorgeous' might be seen as valuing cultural difference, Anna indicates the danger of such representations in terms of 'belittling' this group, thus reinforcing broader patterns of cultural domination and subordination (Benhabib, 2002; Young, 1990). Anna argues against a discourse that infantilises where support of these students reflects a lowering of expectations. Anna's concerns resonate with those of Ferfolja (2009, and others, e.g. Matthews, 2008; Sidhu and Taylor, 2007) to the extent that such belittlement may perpetuate deficit understandings of these students.

Following Matthews (2008), such understandings could be attributed to educators' lack of familiarity with the social, historical and political backgrounds of these students, as Anna further noted:

> [they are a] new intake of brand new people, we've never seen before. We don't know anything about them, all we know is this horrific DVD we saw from the settlement people from the camp in Bangladesh that was full of black mud and excrement and no schooling, and then suddenly they're like butterflies at Peppermint Grove all running about and smiling and skipping and looking happy, and acting quite young but very vulnerable, very vulnerable.

Anna's remarks here are indicative of broader concerns about the inadequacies of current resourcing in schools to address the complex educational and social needs of the shifting and changing nature of the refugee student population (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Refugee Council of Australia, 2008; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007, 2009). Under these circumstances, the lack of familiarity Anna describes in relation to the school's new intake of Rohingyan students is far from surprising. Given that the educators at Peppermint Grove are provided with limited resourcing to gain familiarity and expertise with this specific group of refugee students, their tendency to essentialise and infantilise these students is also unsurprising – especially given that their knowledge of them seems to be limited at this time to a snapshot of their 'horrific' pre-settlement experiences and to their seeming immaturity and vulnerability on arriving at Peppermint Grove. This fragmented knowledge seems likely to generate a positioning of these students within at-risk or victim discourses that impede parity of participation on the basis of cultural misrecognition (Ferfolja, 2009; Fraser, 1997; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

Analogous problems were evident for another educator, Maria. In the following scenario Maria refers to a particular incident that she describes as challenging her assumptions about difference:

> There was an incident that happened between some girls who were from Congo and Burundi and I'd put them together to do some dance, some African dance, and I assumed that because I was inviting them to bring along their African dances that they were going to be really sort of attuned to each other and even if they may bring in different sorts of dancing that they would all be open and very willing to share and to connect with each other but instead it brought up a lot of rivalry … and territorial issues that they may be dealing with even in their own country … it got really fiery … almost violent [and] it's really watered down the willingness of all the girls to participate.

This incident, as with the Rohingyan example, points to some of the complex and dynamic challenges currently confronting schools in relation to refugee students. While recognising and valuing culture along these lines was a highly productive way of working for Maria in other contexts with other cultural groups, in this particular context it was unproductive in terms of bringing up 'rivalry' and 'territorial issues' relating to the girls' Congolese and Burundian identities – 'watering down' the girls' willingness to participate. While not intentioned, as with the Rohingyan example, Maria's assumptions about her students' African culture might be interpreted as silencing important issues of difference for these girls. Such silencing could thus also be seen as potentially compromising these girls' parity of participation on the basis of cultural misrecognition (Fraser, 1997). Notwithstanding, what both these scenarios bring to light is these educators' sensitivity to the potentially negative implications arising from mainstream discourses for understanding student marginality in terms of how they can exclude or obscure particular questions of justice. These educators acknowledge that justice may require decision-making within a different paradigm (Fraser, 2007a, 2007c).

For the staff at Peppermint Grove, these concerns informed their attempts to support justice for refugee students. In relation to issues of political representation and cultural recognition, a centring of students' perspectives and a recognition of their cultures as diverse and complex were key priorities (see Benhabib, 2002; Tisdell, 1994). Such centring was, as Samantha noted, about 'understanding where the children are coming from … their starting points … their expectations … their values'. An important priority here was avoiding pre-conceived assumptions of students' cultural backgrounds and listening to and learning from students. Lisa, for example, expressed her concern about assumptions of student difference failing to adequately capture the complexity of student culture and generating a misrecognition of such culture – as she stated 'it's really important to make no assumptions … every day I learn something new … and just when I think, "right, I get that now" … I hear something different'. She further noted:

> I think it's really important to really listen to the kids because none of us know everything about another culture and we can learn so much from the kids. I think any teacher coming here has to be someone who's completely open to give and take, I don't think you can come here with the authoritarian attitude of 'I'm the teacher and I'll teach them what to do' … you need to be open to listening… (Lisa)

For Maria such assumptions similarly did not adequately capture students' complex backgrounds – her view was that they 'put people into boxes and label[led] them'.

She stressed the importance of being 'attuned' to students' complex backgrounds which meant 'being ready to identify what our assumptions are … how we've made these assumptions [and] being flexible to look at alternatives and amend assumptions'. Like Lisa, her approach focused on learning from the students:

> I'm learning a lot from them, I learn a lot about them and about myself. I approach [the students] more from an attitude of wanting to learn from them (not) wanting to impose on them what [my] values are … I tend to ask them a lot of questions in as a creative way as I can to understand … [and] it continues to challenge [and] open up my view of how we are as human beings. (Maria)

As is well recognised in schooling and diversity research, centring students' perspectives and experiences along these lines is a cornerstone of just practice (see Ellsworth, 1992; Enns and Sincore, 2005; hooks, 1994). In these comments such an approach can be seen as working towards greater parity of participation for students in disrupting essentialised and deficit constructions of student marginality and opening up alternative and more positive ways of thinking about and knowing students. This is possible particularly given the critically self-conscious ways in which these educators reflect on their practice and their position of power in relation to students – another cornerstone of just practice (see Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992; Mayo, 2004; Mohanty, 2003; Tisdell, 1994; van Gorder, 2007) – and explicit in Maria's remarks about the importance of 'being flexible', looking at 'alternatives and amend[ing] assumptions' when working with marginalised students. Maria's awareness of her position of power is also evident in her comment that she does not want to 'impose' her values on students. Anna's representation of Rohingyan students is similarly self-reflective in relation to her position of power. Her consideration of the perspective of Rohingyan students, in particular, illustrates awareness of educators' racialised positions of power in their attempts to affiliate with and help these students. She refers to such attempts as potentially 'another kind of racism' – where dominant racialised norms shape educators' interpretation and (mis)recognition of these students. As such she makes these norms visible as cultural products imposed by the dominant group's position of power and racial/cultural privilege (Young, 1990). In making these norms visible, Anna thus acknowledges how educators' racialised positions can reproduce oppressive narratives – in so doing, she enables a challenging of these positions and narratives and an opening up of alternative ways of knowing (Ellsworth, 1992; Mayo, 2004; Mohanty, 2003; Tisdell, 1994; van Gorder, 2007).

Remedying injustices of cultural misrecognition for the refugee students at Peppermint Grove thus necessitated educators adopting a critical reflective approach that was sensitive to the complexities and diversities of students' perspectives and experiences and to the inequities produced through dominant/racialised discourses. Such an approach, in promoting more equitable patterns of cultural recognition, supports greater parity of participation for these students (Fraser, 1997). This approach is also likely to support a reconciliation of discrepancies associated with how justice might best be approached for these students (Fraser, 2007b).

Conclusion

Fraser's three-dimensional model of justice provides a useful lens for capturing, understanding and addressing issues of justice and marginality in schools amid the broader social context where such issues are uncertain, complex and highly

contentious. For the educators at Peppermint Grove, political, economic and cultural injustices were created through dominant/mainstream discourses beyond and within the school that served to exclude, silence and homogenise the equity priorities and concerns of refugee students. Beyond the school dominant education discourses were seen as failing to acknowledge or position as legitimate claims associated with refugee education. These discourses were seen as rendering the school and its students voiceless in subsuming refugee equity priorities under a mainstream and racialised umbrella that ignored the complex educational and social needs of this group. These discourses compromised students' parity of participation especially in relation to matters of political and economic justice. Within the school injustices of cultural recognition impeding refugee students' participatory parity were interpreted as arising from educators' tendencies to homogenise refugee student difference. This homogenising worked unintentionally to reproduce deficit understandings of this difference and to silence the diversity and complexity of students' identities and experiences.

Towards greater parity of participation for refugee students, the school challenged these mainstream/dominant discourses. Beyond the school, and reflecting attempts to pursue political and economic justice, this involved advocacy on the part of educators focused on broadening avenues of funding for specialised programs and resources. Within the school, and concerning attempts to create more equitable patterns of cultural recognition, this involved centring and responding to students' perspectives. Importantly, such efforts drew attention to the particularities within refugee students' social, historical and political backgrounds and supported educators to reflect critically on their practice and their position of power in relation to students.

Such an approach reflects the ethical action (Christie & Sidhu, 2006) referred to at the beginning of this paper that calls the familiar into question through interrogating silences and scrutinising invisibilities. This action is central to pursuing justice for marginalised groups given the broader social conditions of the post-Westphalian context where justice issues are characterised by change, uncertainty, complexity and contention and where current ways of understanding and addressing injustice no longer seem tenable (Fraser, 2007b, 2009). The concerns raised by educators at Peppermint Grove provide insight into how these broader conditions are currently impacting on schools. Importantly, the educators' voices in this paper illustrate the ways in which ethical action might begin to make sense of and support justice for marginalised groups. For this school, ethical action brought to light contentions associated with who counts in relation to matters of justice and how such matters might best be approached. However, it also brought to light how these discrepancies might begin to be addressed. Interrogating the silences and invisibilities created through mainstream discourses supported these educators to generate more equitable patterns of representation, redistribution and recognition for refugee students.

The post-Westphalian context will continue to complicate and create discrepancies about the who and how of justice; this context will also continue to generate new and difficult equity questions and challenges for schools in relation to such discrepancies. Towards the creation of inclusive and just ways of understanding and addressing marginalised students' educational needs, it is this paper's key contention that responding to such challenges must begin with a questioning of the mainstream discourses that curtail political, economic and cultural justice for marginalised students.

Note

1. In Australia, it is largely the states and territories which are responsible for education.

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